



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY, April 3, 2003

House of Representatives

HUMANITARIAN AID TO IRAQ WITH PRODUCTS FROM AMERICA

HON. BOB FILNER
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER: Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I recently introduced a resolution supporting humanitarian assistance from the United States to Iraq. H. Con. Res. 127 reinforces the ideal that we should send American-grown and made products to Iraq--and on American ships!

The United States obviously has a deep and enduring interest in the welfare of the citizens of Iraq who have been living under the regime of Saddam Hussein for decades. Iraq is currently suffering a humanitarian crisis that could worsen during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

An estimated 4.5 million to 10 million people in Iraq, about 40 percent of the population, will require food assistance within a few weeks. Unfortunately, most of the warehouses in Iraq that store food under the "Oil-for-Food" program are empty. There are few food reserves in Iraq. If action is not taken to address this shortfall, people will die of starvation.

Now that Operation Iraqi Freedom has begun, it is our duty to recognize the need for, and prepare for, the delivery of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the people of Iraq. It is our obligation to provide American-grown commodities, such as wheat, to Iraq!

Food security will be significant in improving the quality of life the people of Iraq. Providing United States agricultural commodities to Iraq will help alleviate the humanitarian crisis there, as well as help strengthen our Nation's economy. Our Nation's farmers would certainly be proud to supply humanitarian assistance to a country in great need. Further, our United States maritime industry would be honored to ship supplies to Iraq in order to help with this critical effort.

In addition, the Department of Defense recently created the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance. This office is a coordinated effort between government agencies in order to plan and implement assistance programs in a post-war Iraq. The resolution I have introduced commends the Department of Defense for recognizing the need for, and taking an inter-agency approach to, the delivery of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we can, and must, help to improve the living conditions of the civilian population of Iraq! The fact that we can do this with American products makes this humanitarian effort all the more beneficial, significant, and crucial!